

Key Findings: American Indians in Wisconsin*

Social and Demographic Characteristics

- American Indians in Wisconsin represent diverse nations of people who flourished in North America for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. Today, Wisconsin is home to 11 federally recognized tribes.
- According to the U.S. Census, American Indians made up 0.8 percent of the Wisconsin population in 2000. In 2005, American Indians were estimated to number 50,676 of the 5,581,839 residents of Wisconsin.
- American Indians were a younger population than the state as a whole, with a median age of 27 in 2000. This means a higher proportion of children and young adults and a lower proportion of older adults, compared to the state population as a whole.
- In 2000, the poverty rate among American Indians in Wisconsin was about 22 percent, more than double the rate in the total state population (8.7%). The rate was even higher in children: 27 percent of Indian children were living in poverty.
- The American Indian population has a higher fertility rate (defined as the number of births per 1,000 women aged 15-44) than Wisconsin as a whole. In 2005, the fertility rate was 88.1 births per 1,000 women among American Indians, compared with 61.2 per 1,000 for the state as a whole.

Mother and Infant Health

- The low birthweight rate among births to American Indians in Wisconsin was 5.4 percent in 2005, lower than the rate for all Wisconsin births (7.0%).
- The infant mortality rate for American Indian babies in Wisconsin was 7.5 deaths per 1,000 births during the 2003-2005 period, higher than the overall infant mortality rate (6.4). Nevertheless, this was a marked improvement since the 1987-1991 period, when the American Indian infant mortality rate was 15.2.
- Several risks were found in higher percentages of births to American Indians compared with all births: maternal age less than 20 (18.7%), maternal education less than high school (25.6%), starting prenatal care in the second trimester or later (25.3%), and maternal smoking during pregnancy (35%).

Mortality

- A comparison of age-adjusted death rates (all causes combined) for 2001-2005 shows that American Indians have a higher rate of death than the total state population after taking differences in population age structure into account.
- During the years 2001-2005, the four leading causes of death among American Indians in Wisconsin were heart disease, cancer, unintentional injury, and diabetes.

*Excerpted from: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health, Bureau of Health Information and Policy. *Wisconsin Minority Health Report, 2001-2005* (PPH 5716). January 2008.

- Causes of death with the largest disparities, where the age-adjusted mortality rate among American Indians was at least twice the white rate, were diabetes (3.3 times the white rate), unintentional injury (1.9 times the white rate), and homicide (3.9 times the white rate).

Chronic Diseases

- In 2001-2005, American Indians in Wisconsin had an age-adjusted mortality rate from heart disease of 228 deaths per 100,000 population, higher than the rate in the total population (202 per 100,000). American Indian females had a higher heart disease hospitalization rate than the total female population, while American Indian males had a lower hospitalization rate than all males in Wisconsin.
- American Indians had higher rates of cancer mortality, but lower rates of cancer hospitalization, compared to the total Wisconsin population. The age-adjusted cancer mortality rate among American Indians in 2001-2005 was 214 per 100,000 population, compared with 184 per 100,000 in the total population. The cancer hospitalization rate was 254 hospitalizations per 100,000 among American Indians, and 403 per 100,000 in the total population.
- American Indian males had a higher rate of death from stroke (63 deaths per 100,000) compared to all Wisconsin males (56 per 100,000 population). However, American Indian males had a lower hospitalization rate for stroke (231 hospitalizations per 100,000) compared to all males in the state (254 per 100,000).
- Diabetes deaths and hospitalizations occur at much higher rates among American Indians in Wisconsin compared to the state as a whole. The age-adjusted diabetes mortality rate was 70 deaths per 100,000 among American Indians, more than three times higher than the rate in the total state population (22 per 100,000). The age-adjusted diabetes hospitalization rate was 315 hospitalizations per 100,000 among American Indians, more than twice as high as the rate in the total population (125 per 100,000).

Injury

- American Indians had higher rates of death and hospitalization for unintentional injury (accidents), compared to the total state population. In 2001-2005, the age-adjusted mortality rate for unintentional injuries was 74 deaths per 100,000 among American Indians, and 39 per 100,000 in the total population. The age-adjusted hospitalization rate for unintentional injuries was 914 hospitalizations per 100,000 among American Indians, and 767 per 100,000 in the total population.
- In 2001-2005, the age-adjusted mortality rate from homicide was 7 deaths per 100,000 among American Indians, compared to 4 per 100,000 in the general state population.
- The age-adjusted mortality rate from suicide was also higher among American Indians: 19 deaths per 100,000 population, compared to 11 per 100,000 in the total Wisconsin population.

Communicable Diseases

- American Indians accounted for 0.7 percent of newly reported cases of HIV infection in 2001-2005, about the same as their proportion in the Wisconsin population (0.8%).
- For American Indians, the rate of HIV infections among males (8.0 cases per 100,000 population) was much higher than the rate among females (0.8 per 100,000).

Oral Health

- An estimated 70 percent of American Indians in Wisconsin had seen a dentist in the past year, based on survey results for 2001-2005. This means that 30 percent of American Indians had not seen a dentist in a year or more.

Environmental Health

- An estimated 9 percent of American Indians in Wisconsin are reported to have asthma, according to combined data for the years 2001, 2002, and 2004. This is the same percentage as in the total Wisconsin population.
- In 2005, 1.1 percent of American Indian children who received a blood lead test had elevated lead levels in their blood. This is lower than the percentage among all Wisconsin children tested (3.4%).

Behavioral Health Risks

- According to survey results for 2001-2005, 36 percent of American Indian adults in Wisconsin smoke cigarettes. This is significantly higher than the smoking rate in the total adult population for those years (22%).